

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 004147

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV MOPS IZ

SUBJECT: IRAQI MCNS MEETS TO DISCUSS TRANSFER OF SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3853

1B. BAGHDAD 3731

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (a), (b), (d)  
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11. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: The Iraqi Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS) met on October 4 to discuss, among other subjects, the conditions for the transfer of security responsibilities from the Coalition to Iraqi civil authorities. Prime Minister Jaafari stated a preference for a "go slow" approach on the transfer of security responsibility. Before Iraqi authorities can assume responsibility for security, he noted, the militia problem must be addressed and more locals must be recruited into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to serve in their own cities or regions. In addition, Jaafari stressed that the chain of command for Iraqi forces, both military and police, must be articulated clearly in the plan. He clearly will not agree to any plan that gives provincial governors authority over national forces. This cable focuses on the conditions for transfer of security responsibility; other issues discussed at the meeting will be addressed in a septel. END SUMMARY.

12. (S//REL GBR AUS) The MCNS met at the home of Prime Minister Jaafari the night of October 4. Present were Jaafari; Minister of Defense Saadoun al-Dulime; Minister of Interior Bayan Jabr; National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie; the Prime Minister's Spokesman Laith Kubba; the Ambassador; MNF-I Commanding General Casey; British Charge d'Affaires Tim Torlot; and MNF-I Deputy Commanding General Brims. A translator and notetakers also attended. Minister of State for National Security Affairs Karem al-Anzi was absent.

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CONDITIONS FOR TRANSFER OF SECURITY RESPONSIBILITY  
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13. (S//REL GBR AUS) First on the agenda was the presentation to the Prime Minister of the final report of the Joint Committee to Transfer Security Responsibility (JCTSR) Principals Group. The Principals Group, which comprises most members of the MCNS save Jaafari and al-Anzi, was originally scheduled to deliver its report on September 25, but their presentation was postponed when Jaafari called an emergency meeting of the MCNS (septel). Briefly, the report sets forth the conditions which must be met before security responsibilities for urban and/or provincial areas may be handed over by the Coalition to Iraqi civil authorities. These conditions are described in reftels.

14. (S//REL GBR AUS) This was the first time Jaafari had seen the report. His initial reaction was to suggest that everyone look through it over the next day or so and then reconvene the MCNS to reach a decision. NSA Rubaie wanted a quick resolution and described in general terms the contents of the report. Minister of Interior Jabr described how it had been completed in close cooperation between Iraqi and Coalition leaders and that after some initial disagreements, it now fully reflected the views of all parties.

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JAAFARI'S CONDITIONS  
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14. (S//REL GBR AUS) Jaafari responded that he has spoken to President Bush about this topic and the President assured him that U.S. forces will not leave Iraqi cities until the Iraqis are fully capable of handling all security problems. Jaafari explained that, in his opinion, the following three conditions must be met prior to the transfer of security responsibility:

--There must be sufficient Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) available to handle any problems that arise, and if additional forces must be called from other areas to assist, these forces must be able to respond without leaving their own areas of responsibility unprotected;

--The militias, which are a "two-edged sword," must be absorbed into the ISF before the MNF turns over security responsibility;

--The security forces in each city must comprise at least

some members who come from that area, as they will be more likely to preserve security in their own cities and also because a city's population will be less inclined to make trouble or distrust the ISF if their sons are among the police and army assigned there.

16. (S//REL GBR AUS) Jaafari stated that he is not ashamed to say in the media that the MNF must stay until the Iraqis are fully capable of handling all problems. He is not yet confident that the ISF are at that point. Jabr assured him that the plan for transfer specifies that the MNF will remain nearby and prepared to respond if needed, so there is no need to worry about leaving other parts of the country exposed by bringing in ISF reinforcements from elsewhere. He and Rubaie also stressed that a transfer of responsibility will take place only in areas that are considered to be safe and where the threat level is low. Jaafari brushed this aside and asked what will happen if conditions in an area subsequently change for the worse. He then returned to the need to integrate the militias into the ISF and to recruit more locals. Rubaie reiterated that he was confident that the report addresses all of Jaafari's concerns.

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QUESTIONS OF INTRA-IRAQI COMMAND AND CONTROL

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17. (S//REL GBR AUS) Minister of Defense Dulime raised the issue of the lack of clearly defined lines of authority and chain of command for national forces called to assist local police forces controlled by each province's governor. Under the plan, security responsibility will be turned over to committees headed by the provincial governors. Dulime said he does not trust the judgment of the governors on security matters and stated that firm command and control procedures must be clearly established before security responsibilities are accepted. Jaafari strongly concurred, saying that he wants everyone to clearly realize that Iraq is not a "vast democracy or Scandinavian country." There are serious problems, Jaafari said, between the central government and the provincial governments. In some past cases the ISF has taken sides when such problems arose, he continued, and this cannot be tolerated. The recent incident in Basrah in which local police arrested two British soldiers and then handed them over to militiamen, which the Prime Minister mentioned several times, loomed large in Jaafari's thinking. Jaafari stressed that there can be no question about lines of authority and chains of command: the police must respond to the commands of the Minister of Interior, the army to the Minister of Defense, and both of those ministers to the commander-in-chief -- the Prime Minister. He stressed, "If it were up to the governor of Basrah, he would declare war on the British. We cannot let the governors decide when to call in ISF or, on the other hand, give them the authority to prevent ISF from entering their provinces when security needs arise."

18. (S//REL GBR AUS) GEN Casey noted that Jaafari's concern is fundamental: "What is the role of the central government in providing security in the provinces?" He suggested that language be added to the conditions to specify that MOD forces would be under the command of the Minister of Defense. All present agreed that this should not be a problem. However, a more difficult issue is how to define who has the authority over the police, given the provisions of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) that give the authority to appoint chiefs of police to local councils and not to the MOI. Rubaie and the Ambassador echoed that taking control over local police away from a governor potentially violates the TAL and possibly the new constitution, which guarantees to the provinces some rights over security matters.

19. (S//REL GBR AUS) Jaafari stressed that when he talks about difficulties between the provinces and the central government he is not talking about simple matters such as local crime. Rather, he continued, he is speaking of issues that have national consequences, namely the fight against terrorists who would see the government and democracy defeated. Command and control issues, he said, must be clearly defined in favor of national authority. In addition, he added, the militia issue must be addressed and plans must be made to ensure that portions of the ISF in each area include members indigenous to that region. It was agreed that the JCTSR needs to address these fundamental points in more detail before the plan can be accepted.

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COMMENT  
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110. (S//REL GBR AUS) COMMENT: Many of Jaafari's concerns about the transfer of responsibility are clearly addressed in the report, which he had not had the opportunity to review prior to the meeting. These concerns include provisions for MNF troops to reinforce Iraqi units should the need for assistance arise. Coalition members of the JCTSR foresaw the

command and control issue. Much effort was expended to get the Iraqis to address this question during the committee meetings. The underlying problem appears to be an immature and yet to be fully-developed governmental system from the local level through the provinces to the national level. An example is the basic distrust between local and provincial governments and leaders in some areas. In fact, the nature of these relationships was at the heart of some of the most difficult issues during the constitutional drafting process and have yet to be fully resolved. The Working Group of the JCTSR continues to meet and work on an implementing arrangement memorandum of understanding based on the conditions specified in the final report, which would clarify the command and control relationships that are needed to allay Jaafari's concerns.

¶11. (S//REL GBR AUS) COMMENT continued: Jaafari's insistence that the militia problem be addressed before MNF relinquishes control is a new twist, as is his call for more local recruitment. In fact, they are probably linked since Jaafari hopes to see militiamen absorbed into the security forces. However, the integration of the Peshmerga and/or the Badr Corps into the regular ISF is not something we see happening in the near future. (NOTE: Jabr pointed out that he is working already on recruiting locals for police forces assigned to certain regions. Dulime said that his budget will need to be augmented if Jaafari expects him to recruit, train, and integrate locals into already formed units. END NOTE.) Jaafari's "go slow" approach seemed to surprise Iraqi members of the JCTSR, particularly Rubaie, who has been pushing for the rapid transfer of security responsibilities in certain areas. The JCTSR will continue to work on a plan that will address Jaafari's concerns. END COMMENT.

Khalilzad